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France

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

France simulates outbreak in poultry farm, tests veterinary services

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Report Highlights:

On November 3 and 4, France conducted a simulation of an avian flu outbreak at a poultry farm in Brittany. The intent of this simulation was to test the readiness and coordination between local vets, police and gendarmerie officers as well as with fire brigades. More than 120 journalists covered the test. Initial analysis shows that the exchange of information among various authorities was positive but that coordination could be further improved. It is expected that in the coming weeks, the Ministry of Agriculture will come out with suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of local agricultural and veterinary services in case of an avian flu outbreak.

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On November 3 and 4, France conducted a simulation of an avian flu outbreak on a poultry farm in Brittany. This simulation was set to test the readiness of the local and national veterinarian services in case of a real outbreak. The farm raises 60,000 chickens.

The first day tested the readiness of the local veterinarian services when a suspected case was found on the farm. A quarantine area was set, all moves of animals within the perimeter were forbidden, and epidemiological surveys of neighboring farms were launched. On the second day, the fictitious flu case was confirmed, a mock slaughter (in a humane manner) of the entire the flock took place and the quarantine was enhanced.

During those two days, experts monitored the coordination among local vets, police and gendarmerie officers as well as with fire brigades. Local sanitary specialists were trained on how to use protective clothing and equipment as well as how to provide effective and calm information to the media. More than 120 journalists covered the test. While approving such a test, French poultry farmers were worried that extensive media coverage of the test could mislead consumers and result in lower poultry sales. Fortunately for them, the media coverage has been rather low-key.

Initial analysis shows that the exchange of information among various authorities was positive but that coordination could be further improved. It is expected that in the coming weeks, the Ministry of Agriculture will come out with suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of local agricultural and veterinary services in case of an avian flu outbreak.